Government. The expansion is to be completed in 51 months.

Extension of Creamy Layer Policy to SCs in UPSC Appointments

2393. SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the policy regarding creamy layer is applied to Backward Classes in UPSC appointments; and

(b) if so, the reasons for not applying creamy layer criteria in the case of Scheduled Castes so as to provide opportunity to the really deserving SC candidates?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The creamy layer criteria have been adopted in relation to OBCs keeping in view the relevant directions of the Supreme Court in Writ Petition No. 930 of 1990. Since these directions of the Supreme Court do not relate to Scheduled Castes, the creamy layer criteria have not been applied in their case.

Measures to Improve the Lot of Agricultural workers in Gujarat

2394. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that for the unskilled agricultural workers in the State of Gujarat minimum wages have been fixed at Rs. 15 per day since 1990 which is the lowest in comparison to other States in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government have advised the State Government to revise and increase the minimum wages for agricultural workers in the State;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government of Gujarat thereto; and

(d) other measures Government propose to initiate to improve the lot of agricultural workers in Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) As per information furnished by the State Government of Gujarat, the minimum wages for the unskilled category of agricultural workers are Rs. 34/- per day. These are not the lowest wages in country.

(b) to (c) The Central Government have been advising the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations from time to time to revise the minimum rates of wages in accordance with the provision of the Act and as per the recommendation made in various fora. The steps recommended include the provision of a variable Dearness Allowance in the minimum rates of wages, revision of wages in two years and to fix wages are above the floor level minimum wage as suggested from time to time.

Government's move to seek industry's views on opening up of consumer goods industries

2395. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's commitment to World Trade Organisation provisions has prompted Government to seek industry's views on opening of the consumer goods industry and eliminate qualitative restrictions on their imports;

(b) if so, whether Government discussed this issue with all the organisations and industrialists;

(c) if so, their reaction thereto; and

(d) by what time final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Article XI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 1994 requires that no

prohibitions or restrictions other than duties, taxes or other charges, whether made effective through quotas, import or export licences or other measures shall be maintained by any member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, keeping in view the difficult balance of payments situation, India has been maintaining import restrictions since 1948 under Article XII, and since 1950 under Article XVIII on products including consumer goods.

During the consultations of the WTO Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions with India held in December, 1995, many members stated that India's balance-of-payments position was comfortable, that India did not currently face the threat of a serious decline in foreign exchange reserves as set out in Article XVIII and that, therefore, continued recourse to import restrictions for balance-of-payments reasons by India could not be justified. Many members requested India to present a time-table for phasing out these restrictions. In its conclusion, the Committee welcomed India's readiness to resume the consultations in October, 1996 and to notify to the WTO all remaining restrictions maintained for balance-of-payments purposes soon after the announcement of the 1996-97 Export-Import-Policy.

According, a notification regarding the quantitative restrictions was made to the WTO in July, 1996.

The time-table for removal of quantitative restrictions maintained on import of products, including the consumer goods, will be known only after the resumed consultations with India in the WTO Committee on Balance-of-Payments-Restrictions, which have since been postponed to January, 1997 at the request of the International Monetary Fund which participates in these consultations.

There is no requirement to consult the industry in the removal of Quantitative Restrictions. However, Industry's view on major trade policy issue are made known during interactions at the meetings held by the Commerce and Industry Ministries from time to time, including at the meetings of the Board of Trade, and these are taken into account while formulating the policies.

गेहूं और चावल की आपूर्ति के संबंध में विभिन्न राज्यों से शिकायतें प्राप्त होना

2396. **श्री ईश दत्त यादव:**
श्री नागमणि:

(क) क्या **खाद्य** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को गेहूं और चावल की आपूर्ति के संबंध में विभिन्न राज्यों से कोई शिकायतें प्राप्त हुई हैं;

(ख) यदि हां, तो जनवरी, 1996 से अब तक कितनी शिकायतें प्राप्त हुई हैं;

(ग) किस प्रकार की शिकायतें प्राप्त हुई हैं और इस संबंध में व्याप्त भ्रष्टाचार को दूर करने हेतु सरकार द्वारा क्या कार्यवाही की गई है;

(घ) क्या सरकार गेहूं की आपूर्ति में व्याप्त भ्रष्टाचार को दूर करने में सफल नहीं हो पायी है; और

(ङ) यदि हां, तो इस पर सरकार की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है?

खाद्य मंत्री तथा नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव): (क) से (ङ) भारतीय खाद्य निगम के गोदामों में खाद्यान्नों की कथित अपर्याप्त उपलब्धता आपूर्ति किए गए खाद्यान्नों की गुणवत्ता, संबंधित राज्यों को खाद्यान्नों का अपर्याप्त संचलन/भेजे जाने, गोदामों के बंद होने और खाद्यान्नों की आपूर्ति में भारतीय खाद्य निगम/राज्य सरकारों के अधिकारियों द्वारा किए गए कथित कदाचार से संबंधित भ्रष्टाचार आदि के बारे में राज्य सरकारों और अन्य से शिकायतें/रिपोर्ट प्राप्त होती हैं। भारतीय खाद्य निगम से संबंधित शिकायतों की जांच भारतीय खाद्य निगम के परामर्श में की जाती है और उपयुक्त उत्तर भेजे जाते हैं। चूंकि सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के क्रियान्वयन का उत्तरदायित्व राज्य सरकार का है इसलिए इसमें हुए भ्रष्टाचार से संबंधित शिकायतें आवश्यक कार्रवाई करने के लिए राज्य सरकारों को भेजी जाती हैं। भारतीय खाद्य निगम द्वारा की गई गेहूं की खुली बिक्री से संबंधित अब तक प्राप्त हुई 7 शिकायतों